

## MONKEY TRAP / Synopsis of Book I

**Logline:** Aliens invade the minds of two lovers, distort their realities, then pit them against each other in a struggle to the death... while the fate of humanity hangs in the balance.

**Summary:** The story takes place in the present-day, in normal settings. It spans just a few days, starting with three events occurring simultaneously at dawn on a Memorial Day weekend:

John Connard, a Special Forces captain turned assassin, ambushes a drug-lord at his enclave in the Colombian jungle. Fleeing, he is shot and falls off a cliff, dying.

A crippled astrophysicist at Goddard Space Flight Center turns satellite cameras spaceward then screams a warning -- incoming meteor. One part splits toward South America, one part toward Washington, DC, but... no impact.

Lara Picard, a prosecuting attorney and triathlete, flies down a bike trail in DC. She flips off an embankment and lands on the rock below, broken and dying.

Alien minds heal the two broken bodies, but then subtly manipulate their emotional states. John has a thirst for vengeance; his kid sister was murdered by the drug trade. Lara has buried guilt; she couldn't save her sociopathic first husband from suicide. Working these weaknesses, the aliens persuade each that the other is evil -- a menace to the imminent evolution of humanity into a better species, and especially to Lara's nine-year-old son Joshua. Lara and John actually are current friends and lovers, highly intelligent and caring people, but the aliens cloud their minds and distort their perceptions to prevent recognition.

The two sink deeper into the emotional morass as their mutual search-and-destroy mission races forward. They agonize over dealing death but exult in the supernatural powers provided by the aliens. The stakes for the conflict are raised when the first battle in an FBI safehouse is a standoff, but they both learn and get deadlier. The second battle in a New England rock quarry results in a narrow escape for both. Lara evades government control and goes on the run. John chases her to the final battle in a New Haven power plant. The pressure of combat and the menace of destruction of all they hold dear continually work to degrade their moral compasses.

But in the final battle, Lara and John put it together, recover their true natures, see through false perceptions, recognize each other, reject power for love, and eject the alien minds -- barely in time to avoid a Romeo-and-Juliet outcome. So they pass the monkey trap test (for monkeys the bait is food, for humans it is power). This tells the aliens that the human race is ready for its next evolutionary step: even though under extreme pressure, the test organisms were both smart enough and grounded enough to avoid the trap. Thus the mystery -- who's good and who's evil -- becomes clear, and the hidden purpose behind the events becomes clear.

**The Trilogy:** Eva, the child conceived by Lara and John at the end of this story, later becomes the first of a new species of human, *Nova sapiens*. The boy Joshua later becomes her protector. His story is told in Book II: Hiding Hand.